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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 002585

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: GOI WANTS TO COORDINATE ON BURMA DURING EU
PRESIDENCY

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MC TOM COUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS 1.5 B&D

11. (C) IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FROM MARCO DELLA SETA, MFA OFFICE DIRECTOR COVERING BURMA, POL MC AND POLOFF PASSED A SHORT HISTORY OF U.S. POLICY TOWARDS BURMA AND BRIEFLY DISCUSSED U.S. REACTION TO AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S DETENTION. DELLA SETA OFFERED A PRECIS OF EU AND ITALIAN POLICY TOWARDS BURMA AND EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO COORDINATE CLOSELY WITH THE U.S. DURING ITALY'S EU PRESIDENCY.

12. (C) ACCORDING TO DELLA SETA, IN THE LAST YEARS' INTERNAL EU DEBATE, THE U.K. AND FRANCE, AMONG OTHER NORTHERN-TIER EU COUNTRIES, SUPPORTED HARDER-HITTING SANCTIONS AGAINST THE REGIME. GERMANY, AUSTRIA, PORTUGAL, AND ITALY SAW LESS VALUE IN SANCTIONS; CONSIDERING THAT ASIAN COUNTRIES AND AUSTRALIA HAVE NOT IMPOSED SANCTIONS, AN EU SANCTIONS REGIME IS INEFFECTIVE. EARLIER THIS YEAR THE EU COMPROMISED AND DELAYED IMPLEMENTATION OF A STRICTER REGIME UNTIL OCTOBER. THE DELAY ALLOWS FOR A ONE-TIME EU TROIKA (CURRENT EU PRESIDENT, FUTURE EU PRESIDENT, AND CFSP HIGH REP) TO VISIT RANGOON IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE THE GOB TO EASE RESTRICTIONS ON THE OPPOSITION.

13. (C) DELLA SETA SAID THAT THE GOI DOES NOT HAVE HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR THE TRIP, DELAYED (BUT NOT CANCELED) BY THE ATTACK ON ASSK AND HER SUPPORTERS FRIDAY MAY 30. THE EU DELIVERED A DEMARCHE ON JUNE 9, AND PLANS TO ISSUE A JOINT DECLARATION IN THE COMING WEEKS. DELLA SETA ALSO SAID THERE IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY THE EU WILL IMMEDIATELY IMPLEMENT THE STRONGER SANCTIONS PLANNED FOR OCTOBER. HE NOTED THAT THE ITALIAN MFA BELIEVES THE GOB IS NOT RESPONSIVE TO THE CONCERNS OF THE EU. THE REAL PLAYERS ARE CHINA, INDIA, PAKISTAN, AND THE U.S. THE GOI WOULD LIKE TO SEE ASEAN INCREASE ITS PRESSURE ON THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT, BUT RECOGNIZES THE CULTURAL RELUCTANCE ON THE PART OF ASEAN NATIONS TO "MEDDLE" IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF PARTNER COUNTRIES. DELLA SETA POINTED OUT A JOINT DECLARATION BY MALAYSIAN PM MAHATHIR AND JAPANESE PM KOIZUMI, WHICH HE SAID WAS CRITICAL OF THE GOB'S ACTIONS, AS A POSSIBLE POSITIVE STEP. DELLA SETA SAID HE WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH THE ITALIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON TO INSTRUCT THEM TO COORDINATE CLOSELY WITH THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

14. (C) COMMENT: DELLA SETA'S BRIEF DISCOURSE ON THE HISTORY OF EU-BURMA SANCTIONS WAS INTERESTING. HOWEVER, AS HE SAID, ITALY HAS NO CONCRETE INTERESTS (ECONOMIC OR POST-COLONIAL) IN BURMA AS DOES FRANCE. AS THE INCOMING EU PRESIDENT, THE GOI IS INTERESTED IN CLOSE COORDINATION WITH THE U.S. TO MAXIMIZE PRESSURE ON THE GOB AND LEVERAGE THE EU'S ADMITTEDLY SMALL INFLUENCE. END COMMENT.
SKODON

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